

Philosophy as a Questioning and Dialogue: Concerning the Problem of Philosophical Knowledge Translation

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Abstract—The article highlights the difficulties arisen in the process of philosophy teaching in a technical university. The purpose of the article is to display heuristic approaches to increase the efficiency of teaching philosophy and to shoe gaining student interest. Authors indicate contact points between philosophical, humanitarian and natural science knowledge together with demonstration the way how various scientific worldviews consonance could be expressed in the teaching process. It is stressed that the advantage of philosophy as intellectual practice is in the fundamental orientation of understanding the position of a person in the world and in being indifferent to the fate of civilization and culture. Besides, philosophy always comes out of specific historical conditions based on the personality of the author. Nevertheless, philosophy and natural science add each other mutually so it should be especially stressed in the teaching process.

Keywords—*philosophy; philosophy teaching; education; higher education; society; knowledge of humanities; natural science knowledge*

I. INTRODUCTION

The process philosophy teaching in a technical university could be described by a number of features. The most important of them is that the interest and respect to the subject itself common with students of humanities is often completely absent amongst students with a natural, mathematical and technical mentality.

Students of a technical university being aimed by the future profession to be able to find and implement the most effective solution of practical, tangible and obvious tasks are not entirely sure of philosophical knowledge significance for creating a successful history of their own lives. Being targeted from school times to the in-depth study natural

science subjects, future engineers do not neither have sufficient knowledge in the field of history, literature, etc., nor the desire to deepen this kind of knowledge and this does not facilitate understanding and the significance of philosophical knowledge. Meanwhile being faced with unfamiliar philosophical constructions and finding that philosophy perception requires extensive knowledge not only in natural science but also in humanities. Being amazed at first, student finds out a pragmatic path very quickly. The understanding comes that the introduction to philosophy will require a lot of time together with enough efforts which would be borrowed from main courses. As philosophy studies require a lot of time and effort, which is to be distributed betwin all the disciplines including the major ones, a student of a Technical University develops a certain stereotype towards philosophy classes, as well as the subject itself. It seems to the student that the course of philosophy is a secondary one and it is unnecessary; but since the discipline is included in the state educational standard any student should have to endure the educational process for the sake of obtaining a diploma.

However, the experienced teacher which has deep knowledge in his course has the opportunity to improve on student's attitude towards philosophy. The course itself is so rich with message content that each attendee could find out some interesting and relevant information for his life. Interest is the main force that increases the student's motivation for learning process. Both teachers and psychologists agree with this statement: "Any learning is possible only insofar as it relies on one's own interest ..." notes L.S. Vygotsky. There is no other learning. The whole question is how much interest is directed along the line of the course being studied but not related to the influences of rewards, punishments, fear, the desire to please, etc." [1].

II. PHILOSOPHY AS A WORLD OF IDEAS

The first topic of the course, “The subject and role of philosophy in the society” would provide one with an opportunity to imagine philosophy as a battle of ideas both in the past and in the present. Philosophy could be also imagined as eternally discussed knowledge associated only with a person who seeks the way to transform the world in order to achieve self-preservation, survival and improving the quality of life. The analysis of the philosophy subject genesis catches substantial interest using of original philosophical texts that differs from each other with the unique style, originality of the authors' judgments and the fundamental discrepancies of points of view. This requires from the teacher a sizable amount of preliminary work to select a few of indicative works from the vast volume of philosophical texts. Nevertheless, this work is feasible by the fact that students have the opportunity to grasp quickly the main problems of philosophy. Besides technical university students are convinced that great creators of natural science knowledge did not distanced themselves from philosophical knowledge but they were active as developers of new philosophical approaches [2]. Pythagoras was the first one in the history who call himself a “philosopher”, Aristotle, who generalized and systematized all the natural science knowledge achieved by his time in the great tractate called “Physics”, R. Descartes, G. Leibniz, P. Teilhard de Chardin, P.W. Bridgman, W. Quine and many others made a significant contribution to the development of both natural science and philosophical knowledge. Many philosophers, such as P.A. Florensky, P. Kropotkin, V. I. Vernadsky, and many others, they started not only with a passion for natural science knowledge but also continued to engage in natural sciences in parallel with philosophical research. Moreover, it is common practice that those scientists who have reached their peak in the profession started to think about philosophical problems. This has been the case since Aristotle's time: after he created his famous “Physics”, he understood quickly the need for a philosophical analysis of the problems upraised in it [3]. This is how “Metaphysics” appeared, literally “what after physics”. It should be noted that by that time people understood the whole set of achieved scientific knowledge as physics. After years and including the last century repeatedly reproduce this kind of situation: E. Husserl who started out with mathematics became the creator of phenomenology and P.W. Bridgman being the Nobel prize winner in physics created operationalism, P. Teilhard de Chardin known as the author of world-famous works in natural science completed his intellectual activities with the famous philosophical work “The Phenomenon of Man”, etc.

Philosophy being as a love of wisdom initially included all people's knowledge about the world and man. However, when science took shape in the 18th century as a social institution it gave the possibility to achieve such impressive successes so by the beginning of the 19th century mathematics began to pretend to create mathematical model of the world, physics — physical, etc. Such independent branches of science as psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science stood out from philosophical knowledge and

began to claim the scientific status. Since then, the relationship of philosophy and science has become less favorable. Starting from the 19th century philosophy developed a critical attitude toward science and science often raised the question of the scientific status of philosophy.

Analysis of the relationship between philosophy and science and, accordingly, ascertaining the status of philosophy in the system of knowledge is the second possibility of awakening student interest. Acquaintance with the works of N.A. Berdyaev, M. Heidegger and other thinkers whose works represented this plot in the most polemical way turns out to be advantageous for a student with initially understanding that natural science knowledge is of great importance for the society and people's life arrangement and comes to the conclusion that there is another knowledge which is equally valuable for life - philosophical knowledge. According to N.A. Berdyaev, although “technology is the last love of a person and he is ready to change his image under the influence of the object of his love”, yet technology cannot establish the goals of life so it must be done by the person himself [4]. Sooner or later, each of us thinks about what the world around us is, where one's place is in the modern world, why one has to study and work so much, what the meaning of life is and whether it exists as an indisputable reality. As A. Camus remarked, “To decide whether life is worth living is to answer the fundamental question of philosophy” [5]. The philosophy is the first of all disciplines raised the meaning of life question and this is philosophy's advantage over the special sciences. Philosophy is not always able to provide help for solving everyday practical problems but it gives opportunity to see and to feel their depth. Philosophy has no direct relations the efficiency level of decisions done but it could offer solutions which will be unexpected and invisible for everyday mentality. In addition, only philosophy raises the question of man's nature of identity attainment together with fulfillment of real and potential life opportunities. Philosophical questioning is peculiar only to a person as an identity since the philosophy, unlike natural sciences which are striving for objectivity, does not exclude a person's inside view from the process of world cognition. On the one hand a man asks about existence as a creator and on the other hand as a creature whose being has been brought into question by the surrounding world by the very brevity, fragility and finiteness of his life. Understanding of this indisputable fact sets the problem of the meaning of life for each person inevitably and each person is forced to argue about it in his own way comprehending his own living conditions. In this connection the conclusion of M. Heidegger that “the measurement of the value of philosophy by the idea of science is already the most fatal derogation of its true being” is no longer so stunning for students of a technical university especially [6]. Science speaks about the reality around us and philosophy - about the life, what it can become due to everyone's efforts. Philosophy helps a person to comprehend his life from the point of view of what it should be via authentic goals of his personal characteristics. The one could take in the philosophical worldview only by understood the essence of thinking turned to goals and values.

Thus, it shows that philosophical problems couldn't be alien to technical university students, since they, like all people, think about real life and about main goals of their personal existence. And if the one with the engineering mentality together with G. Galileo is convinced that the book of nature is written in the language of mathematics, then the task of the teacher of philosophy is to show that the book of life is set out in the language of philosophy. Only philosophy proved that all the knowledge acquired with the help of reason was obtained by their creators not for the sake of obtaining new knowledge but for the sake of improving life. This aspiration helped the science to open new life horizons and supported philosophy to comprehend their advantages and dangers. It determines the prognostic function of science and its success in changing the surrounding reality.

III. PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF A DIALOGUE

The next moment, which allows intensifying interest to the philosophy, is in the appeal to a rich, ambiguous but always instructive biographical material from the life stories of great thinkers. In this regard, it is necessary to show the audience that not all philosophers lived as they thought but they thought precisely in order to have the opportunity to live. Senseless, spontaneous, chaotic world did not seem to them suitable for human being. Since that moment it is necessary to destroy a stable stereotype about philosophers as cabinet people, especially bookish and far from the events of real life with its daily care for their daily bread. Reflections of philosophers have always been combined with civic duty, courage, active service to their nation, patriotism, as evidenced by the biographies of P.Ya. Chaadayev and J.G. Fichte, such soldiers of First World War as L.J.J. Wittgenstein, P. Teilhard de Chardin and N. Hartmann together with N.A. Berdyaev, I.A. Il'in, B.P. Vysheslavtsev and others, who were expelled from Russia during the revolutionary period but did a lot to keep the spiritual traditions of Russia. Many examples of this kind form an understanding of the sense and clarify the philosophers' occupation, their core as a person and citizen together with their aspiration to understand the surrounding era [7].

Philosophers did not have only the intention of being modern but they also tried to find different ways to explain their views. They found an opportunity to speak their language with each social group or established practice. In this way the philosophy could be represented in the form of a strict scientific treatise (R. Descartes, B. Spinoza, G.W.F. Hegel), in the form of a literary work (Novalis, J.P. Sartre, E. Jünger), religious treatise (philosophy of the Middle Ages), as a collection of moral aphorisms (A. Schopenhauer, F. Nietzsche, E.M. Cioran), or as a collection of journalistic articles (N. A. Berdyaev, A. Camus, V. P. Fedotov). Finally, there could be such original forms as pedagogical reasoning (J.J. Rousseau, L.N. Tolstoy), an encyclopaedia (The Enlightenment), a poem (Titus Lucretius Carus, B. de Mandeville), and even film critic (G. Deleuze, S. Žižek). All these genres must be represented in the teaching process [8].

Appeal to the philosophers' thoughts in a poetic or aphoristic (artistic) form is almost always a win-win technique. It stresses the attention of the audience showing

that great philosophers were often at the height of artistic creativity and their creative talent gave help to reveal deeply the essence of the relationship between people, personality with the world. Using artistic devices for the expression of thoughts, philosophy revealed the feelings, emotions and people's experience. This world could not be expressed in a barren style of a scientific language. In addition, the poetic language of philosophy helped not only to express thoughts or phenomena of the surrounding world more accurately but also come close to disclosure of poetry meaning itself or artistic creation. For example, the essence of poetry is expressed by M. Heidegger: "To live poetically" means to be in the presence in front of gods and to be affected by the closeness of the essence of things. Being essentially is "poetic"; it means that it as an institution (founded) is not a merit, but a gift" [9]. A lesson in which students would be asked to discuss this sentence could be very interesting.

It is also would be useful to draw the attention of students to the moment how philosophical ideas were expressed in famous works of art. This layer of culture suggests that philosophical problems are eternal and they inevitably confront with every generation and with every person. Also it should be noted how natural and human sciences borrowed philosophical concepts and ideas sometimes and how philosophers were the first to formulate problems, the scientific study of which later gave rise to entire directions in science [10].

In natural science, there is generally no further return to the problem that has already has a positive solution but one goes further and further along the path of finding new and new problems that require original solutions, which, in fact, ensures the cumulateness of scientific knowledge. In philosophy being always associated with a limited time frame of human life, the variability of living conditions entails the need to change the philosophical approach of solving the same problems that people have already encountered and past generations and eras. Philosophy based on the results of its long-term development, has selected exactly those problem fields that will accompany humanity forever. It is impossible to imagine a culture that would not ask questions about the meaning of life and death, about the position of a person in the world, about the best relations between people and about an ideal society [11]. The formation of specific ideas about the succession in the development of philosophical and cultural traditions, about a person in the system of social relations, etc. is performed by the admission of information kept within the boundaries of adjacent areas of humanitarian knowledge. This shows that philosophers have always been the greatest intellectuals of their time and they based their conclusions on knowledge of history and world culture. The comprehension's breadth and depth of entire historical epochs lies behind the works of J. Huizinga, J. Ortega y Gasset, J.P.G. Ricœur, U. Eco. Philosophers could, in a few sentences, describe entire epochs extremely precisely, express the meaning of ideological trends, scientific theories and trends in art. For example, N.A. Berdyaev describes the Middle Ages in this way: "The Middle Ages are not an epoch of darkness but it is a night epoch. The soul of the Middle Ages is the night soul

when the elements and energies were revealed, which were then closed for the consciousness of the working day of the new history” [12]. And so A.F. Losev expresses the essence of the Renaissance worldview: “In the Renaissance a person began to think for the first time that the picture of the world that was really and subjectively sensually visible to him was his very real picture, that it was not a fiction, not an illusion, not a mistake of sight ..., but we see with our own eyes — this is in fact” [13].

Students of a technical university always enlivened visibly when they deal with philosophy case-study questions like, for example, the demarcation of knowledge, space and time, determinism, dynamic and statistical laws, modern scientific ideas about the structure and properties of matter, etc. the results of theoretical studies from various fields of physics, mathematics, chemistry, associated with the names of great scientists, such as A. Einstein, N. Bohr, W.K. Heisenberg, etc. are attracted. When discussing the issues of “Philosophy as gnoseology and methodology of knowledge: truth and ways to achieve it”, students are convinced that the joint search for truth by scientists and philosophers, both in the history of the development of human thought and today, is embodied in the creative activity of specific people certain historical conditions and related specific ideological field. The very same understanding of truth, objectivity is borrowed by science from philosophy and focuses on the thoughts of modern philosophers [14].

IV. CONCLUSION

Team-work with students in the philosophical knowledge development invites to the search of ways for the best relationship creation between the knowledge which is already available to students and the newly acquired philosophical concepts. This is not about competition and priority but about the development of mental abilities, the expansion of intellectual horizons, the deepening of ideas about a complicated world and no less complicated person in their interaction. To solve this problem, teacher should try to identify the intellectual and spiritual needs of the audience, to show its consonance to various subjects from the world of philosophy. It is important to indicate that philosophy has never been a dogmatic knowledge: it has always had many points of view on various matters. Also, philosophy never was a passive reflection of reality; on the contrary, philosophy itself opened up whole spiritual worlds and had an extremely meaningful dialogue with other forms of spiritual mastery of the world. And in this regard, philosophy is very close to the outlook of the natural sciences and humanities.

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